

A 1792 ✓  
L E C T U R E  
ON A  
BECOMING BEHAVIOUR  
IN  
RELIGIOUS ASSEMBLIES.

DELIVERED  
ON SUNDAY EVENING,  
JANUARY 10, 1773,

AT THE  
MEETING-HOUSE  
IN  
ST. ANDREW'S, CAMBRIDGE.

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By R. ROBINSON,  
PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATION.

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*Hæ Nugæ seria ducent!*

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LECTURE

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY

IN

RELIGIOUS ASSEMBLIES



MEETING HOUSE

ST. ANDREW'S, CAMBRIDGE

BY R. ROBINSON,

PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATION.

THE LATE REV. DR. ROBINSON

EDWARD WOODCROFT

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## A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

**I**NDEVOTION and irreverence in places of public worship have always been complained of in university towns, and though Cambridge is on many accounts the 'most unexceptionable of all seminaries of learning, yet even this famous Academy has been culpable, and is not at present entirely free from blame.

Most graduates in the university either confine themselves to their own college chapels, or behave with propriety when they attend the public places of devotion in the town: but some *undergraduates*, who go to the university as void of manners as of religious principle, unacquainted with the laws of the land, and the statutes of the university, inattentive to the examples of their superiors, the propriety of their own characters, and the miserable influence, that their irreverence has on the common people, elude the vigilance of their tutors, and wander into places of worship, as their own term is, merely for a *lounge*. The dissenters come in for a share of their visits, and



though custom soon produces in their ministers a useful insensibility to such visitants, yet the people, and particularly the fair sex, are frequently interrupted in their devotion.

Many attempts have been made to reform this abuse; there is an old university statute, which forbids *hemming, hawking, and spitting*, during the time of divine service; there is a statute of Charles II. prohibiting *the reading of sermons, and the use of notes*, and requiring preachers to speak *extempore*, for the greater solemnity of public worship; and there was a popular preacher, who a few years ago sharply reproved the practice of scraping with the feet in the gallery of the university-church, (which was done when the sermon was disliked.) in a discourse from Eccl. v. 1. Sometimes the Proctors attend, and punish delinquents, and successive Vice-chancellors, and Heads of houses, have always expressed their abhorrence of irreverence, and discovered the utmost readiness to suppress it.

The present dissenting ministers in Cambridge, it seems, have never met with any personal affront: but on the contrary have been always treated with the utmost civility by the university; however, it happens in their congregations, as it does in the churches, the unthink-  
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ing vivacity of youth sometimes disturbs the people, and particularly at evening lectures. Such an interruption, continued for three or four evenings, gave occasion to the following discourse.

A lady, who was present at the time, and who was particularly pleased with the effect, which it seemed to produce on a great number of gownsmen, who heard it, asked Mr. Robinson to favour her with a copy of it. As he never uses notes in preaching, he wrote the sermon from his memory, as nearly as he could recollect it, and many who had heard it, and who have since read it, think it is written exactly as it was preached. Of this lady I obtained a copy; others also procured copies; at length they were so multiplied, and so mutilated, that, having certain intelligence of a design to print it, I thought it my duty to inform Mr. Robinson, and to entreat his permission to print it from this, which he had read, and had acknowledged a true copy.

Mr. Robinson's answer is in these words:—"As to the sermon, I own, I  
 " am still at a loss to know, what can  
 " make people so eager to transcribe  
 " it. A man should be upon the spot  
 " to be reconciled to such a sermon as  
 " this. Local circumstances may make  
 " that proper, which must appear extra-  
 " vagant

“ vagant in the absence of them. How-  
 “ ever, you know the deference I pay  
 “ to your judgment, and you shall know  
 “ also two things, that give your judg-  
 “ ment in this case an absolute sway.  
 “ I perceive first that I have no choice,  
 “ the sermon will be printed, whether I  
 “ will or not, as three letters from distant  
 “ counties by last post assure me. And  
 “ farther, my friend Martin has assured  
 “ me that he had seen a vile mutilated  
 “ interpolated copy. Now I do think,  
 “ quaint as the sermon is, it may be  
 “ made more so, and I dare say you  
 “ would give me a grave lecture on  
 “ prudence, should I burden myself  
 “ with any body’s nonsense beside my  
 “ own. I call the last part nonsense,  
 “ for such it must appear to those, who  
 “ do not know the truth, the whole  
 “ truth, and nothing but the truth. I  
 “ agree then on three conditions. First,  
 “ that you do not *publish* it. Next, that  
 “ you do not *alter* it, no not for the  
 “ better, for it would not be fair. And  
 “ lastly, that in the advertisement,  
 “ which you intend to prefix, you lay  
 “ aside your partiality for me, and your  
 “ opinion of the sermon, and narrate  
 “ only what we have talked over on  
 “ the *occasion* of preaching it. You  
 “ know the obligations I have to some,  
 “ the

“ the intimacy with more, and the re-  
“ spect for all the members of this uni-  
“ versity, and, consequently; what pain  
“ it would give me to give them any  
“ just ground of offence. To avoid  
“ that I consent to print the *real* ser-  
“ mon.”

I have printed the sermon on the  
terms prescribed me by my friend,  
and I dare say no gentleman who reads  
it will make an improper use of it.

THE EDITOR.

LONDON, *May* 16, 1776.





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A  
L E C T U R E

ON A

BECOMING BEHAVIOUR

IN

RELIGIOUS ASSEMBLIES.

I TIM. iii. 14, 15.

*These things I write unto thee . . . that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar, and ground of the truth.*

**D**O not imagine, my brethren, that I am going to affront your good sense by attempting to give you rules of behaviour at meeting. If your parents have omitted this necessary part of your education; If your masters and tutors have given you no tuition on this head; If you have had no opportunity of forming your deportment by a genteel acquaintance in the world; If you be strangers to that *benevolence*, which never *behaves itself unseemly*; If you have enjoyed none of these advantages, you are, however, in possession of one, of which common-sense will avail itself; that is, the

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constant

constant attendance of several members of this university, whose presence, in your religious assemblies, is a proof of their candour, and a pattern for your behaviour.

Sons of the first families in the kingdom, they are polite from the womb. Designed for the first offices in the church, they are virtuous by profession. Enriched with a variety of knowledge, particularly with that, which relates to the government of mankind, they know the value of religious worship, to the happiness of an individual, to the order of a family, to the government of a state, to the glory of God, and to the universal happiness of mankind. In them you have an example how you *ought to behave yourselves in the church of God*; and should there be one of this number, who should ignorantly or designedly behave ill at public worship, his rudeness, so contrary to the public expectation, and to his own profession, could not fail of operating as an antidote on you. Let us then for the present wave this part of the subject, and, should it appear necessary, let us return to it by and by.

This epistle was written by the great S. Paul, in favour of a young minister, whose family he knew, whose abilities he admired, for whose usefulness he most ardently prayed, for whom, in a word, he entertained the most cordial respect. The good apostle, like a kind father, contemplates every thing, that could profit his *son Timothy*, (as he calls him.) and condescends to direct his most minute affairs. Seemingly of a delicate constitution, subject to *frequent infirmities*, he is advised to a singular regimen; *a little wine*, and a deal of episcopal labour. In public he was to *preach the word*, and to *be instant in season and out of season*. In private he was to *give attendance to reading, to meditate on the several*  
branches



branches of theology, to *give himself wholly to them*. He was to *consider first what S. Paul said*, that is to say, revealed truth, and then, the apostle prays, *the Lord give thee understanding in all things*; as if he had said, May you be, if there can be such a person; an universal scholar! for all knowledge may subserve the gospel of Christ. But, as if all the finest natural and acquired abilities, as if all the accomplishments of nature and grace, as if all the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost were nothing, unless they tended to the good of society, the apostle adds, *I write these things that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth*.

Does not S. Paul here prove himself a perfect judge of mankind? He knew, that miraculous gifts void of popular evidence could answer no valuable end to the bulk of mankind; he knew, that they, who could not follow a train of reasoning, could, however, judge of a man's deportment; and, from his imitation of the deity, would infer that his mission was divine; he knew, that a *mere scholar* was an useless animal, whom the populace would condemn to moulder away in a college-apartment, the world a speculation to him, and he a spectacle to the world; he knew, that the happiness of society did not depend on an arrangement of words: but on a mutual interchange of kind offices; he knew the power of example, and, therefore, exhorted Timothy to *be an example of the believers in word, in behaviour, in charity, in spirit, in truth, in purity*. Happy the people whose pastors thus impress the gospel on their hearts!

The importance of the *behaviour* recommended in the text will be a sufficient reason for avoiding all the litigations, for which this and the following verse have given occasion. To this behaviour let us

wholly attend, and, without pretending to prescribe rules for it, let us only remark, that every idea in the text justifies and enforces a decent deportment in places of religious worship; and each may serve also to confound a contrary conduct.

Behave well in the house of God, because it is *a church*.

Behave well, because it is the church of *the living God*.

Behave well, because it is *the pillar and ground*, that is, *the seat, or residence of truth*.

Behave well because you are in *a church*. The word *church*, you know, is sometimes used indeterminate for any assembly, even for a riotous one. Thus in Acts xix. 32. *The church, or the assembly was confused*. Sometimes it is put for an assembly met for the worship of God, as in Philemon 2d. *Paul to the church in thy house*; and sometimes, in a more confined sense still, for that part of the worshippers only, which *worship God in spirit and truth*. Now take the word in which sense you will, and you will allow, that a decent behaviour in such an assembly always becomes the man, and the christian, and above all the minister of Jesus Christ.

Suppose, in the first place, a *confused assembly* of ignorant people met for as absurd a purpose as the worship of Diana. This assembly is either allowed, or disallowed, by the state. If disallowed, the cognizance of such an affair belongs only to the magistrates, the guardians of public peace and order. If allowed, the disturbing of such an assembly is an insult on government. But, exclusively of both these considerations, what would a man of sense and religion do in such an assembly? *Touched with a feeling* of his brethren's infirmities, he would sigh for the depravity of human nature; he would pity and pray for the deluded people; he would

would exhort *by the meekness and gentleness of Christ* : but he would never think of insulting them. To exasperate is not the way to convert. The Epicureans and Stoics, indeed, nick-named S. Paul. They called that master of address a *babler* : but did that great man imitate so mean a conduct? On the contrary, though nothing could be more absurd than the Athenian superstition, though S. Paul was justly offended with it, yet he began his discourse with a title, of which they were not a little proud, *ye men of Athens*; and all his address to them is a pattern of good manners as well as of true religion. People may be extremely ignorant of religion, and yet respectable members of society. Their birth, their rank, their human literature, their fortune, their offices, all these, with a thousand other things, claim respect, although none may be due to them on a religious account. Behave well then in *every assembly*.

Suppose again *an assembly met for the worship of God*. Is it not the height of brutality to behave ill to such people? There is a God, That God is to be worshipped, are two truths, which all, but here and there an abandoned libertine, confess. The seat of true religion is the heart, and to love God is that religion. The various modes and forms of worship are only different expressions of that love. If men express their veneration for the deity in such a way, as appears to them most agreeable to him, God, no doubt, accepts such worshippers; and will you *curse whom God hath blessed*? To mistake or not to mistake, in the mode, is nothing to the purpose; the form chosen by the assembly in question ought to be supposed to be matter of conscience to them; and Church and State unite in protecting honest, though mistaking, consciences.

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They are right, heaven protects them, and proclaims, *In the integrity of your hearts, ye have done it.*

An assembly convened to pay that just homage to God, which reason and revelation claim, is the most venerable sight in the world; as far superior to a circle of literati met to investigate a science; as far superior to an army assembled to protect civil rights; as far superior to a senate convened to conduct a nation; as the honour of God is above the interests of men. If it be criminal to disconcert the last, what will you call the madness that disturbs the first?

Worshippers of the God of the whole earth! peace be with you! *Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God. Who laid the foundations of the earth, or who stretched the line upon it? Who shut up the sea with doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther? Who caused the day-spring to know his place? Who provided for the raven his food? Who hath given understanding to the heart? Who increaseth the nations and destroyeth them again? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing and the breath of all mankind? Incomparable majesty! these are parts of thy ways! but what art thou? Verily thou art a God, that hidest thyself! thine infinite excellency hid thee from the keenest penetration of reason for ages: but thy son hath revealed thee in the church, revealed thee to the faith of the meanest worshipper; and in thy temple doth every man now speak of thy glory.* Immortal God! may thy peace be with all, who assemble to study thy nature, to admire thy government, to celebrate the praise of thy grace. Let neither ignorance nor impudence disturb thy worship.

When Balaam from the top of a mountain surveyed the Jewish church; when he saw the order of the camp, and the employments of the people; when he saw their altars smoaking, and their priests worshipping,

shipping, base as he was, he was struck with the sight, and could not help exclaiming, *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob!* In this the fordid prophet is worthy of imitation. Thus let us survey a christian assembly. Here stands an orphan, who, by the loss of his parents, is deprived of every earthly resource; he has heard, that in God *the fatherless findeth mercy*, to solicit this mercy is his errand here. There sits a distressed widow, whose guardian-angel is fled, whose handful of meal the creditor is come to seize; her lovely hungry babes around her excite fresh grief; even now, insensible of their loss, they ask her to save the corner of the pew for their father. Alas! let her alone, her soul is troubled in her; she is meditating on that saying, *a father of the fatherless, a judge of the widow is God in his holy habitation*. She is now going to *cast her care* upon God. Yonder comes, with slow and weary steps, a publican. Poor man! his whole life till lately was spent *without God in the world*; a fever took him, he had time to meditate, and he found himself *without Christ and without hope*. Alarmed at his dangerous state, he is coming to *the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help him in time of need*. All along he meditates his own misery and God's mercy, and all along determines to stand in the aisle and say, *God be merciful to me a sinner*. One loaded with mercies comes to praise; another pressed with infirmities comes to pray. Perhaps the abundance of your troubles may divert the attention of some of you from the less important decorum of exterior exactness; perhaps it may even betray you into some awkward gestures: but this indecorum does not signify, every man of sense will consider the integrity of your hearts, and overlook your external expression. The best-bred nobleman for the same reason would accept the honest but awkward gratitude

tude of a poor tenant. God himself looketh not on the outward appearance! but on the heart. Yes! you have well done to come and commit your way unto God! Come in, ye blessed of the Lord. Come, pour out your hearts before him, he is God at hand; this is his memorial for all generations. Should a Balaam behold, even a Balaam would exclaim, *He resteth as an old lion, who shall stir him up? blessed is he that bleisseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee!*

Suppose yet farther, an assembly of people whose names are written in heaven, a church of the first-born, worshipping God in spirit and in truth. Glorious assembly! Eleēt according to the foreknowledge of God the father, through sanctification of the spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Every voice ought to cry, *Grace be to you and peace be multiplied! You are the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the Lots, who weep for the abominations of our Sodom; for our pride, fulness of bread and abundance of idleness. You are the Noahs, the Daniels, the Jobs, for whose sakes our sons and daughters are delivered. Servants of the most high God! who shew unto us the way of Salvation, he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of God's eye. If you be dispersed among all sects and parties, for your sakes shall all sects and parties enjoy their sabbaths. I remember who hath said, It were better for you that a millstone were hanged about your neck, and you cast into the sea, than that you offend one of these. Yes! my redeemer! I remember this, and I remember also the ingratitude of those, who one hour said, Sing us one of the songs of Sion; and the next cried, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof. Christians! be deaf to the senseless noise of persecutors, and listen rather to that voice, which cries, The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. Assemble where you will, in the consecrated cathedral*



thedral, or in the country barn, *where two or three of you are, there is Christ in the midst of you.* Assemble when you will, in season, or out of season, early in the morning, as the people to hear Jesus in the temple; or late at night, as the multitude to hear Paul at Troas; "*it is (as the established service hath it.) very meet, right, and your bounden duty, at all times, and in all places, to give thanks to your holy father, the almighty and everlasting God.*"

Strictly speaking, the respect, that men owe each other, is more founded on their nature than on any other consideration. He, therefore, who would not disturb an assembly of noblemen in divine worship, ought not to disturb an assembly of poor men. Yea, the religious rights of the last are, in some sense, more sacred than those of the first. The comforts, which they enjoy in religious exercises, are all the consolations, that some people have. Hunger, nakedness, poverty, *straitness in all their gates*, are all they have elsewhere. Here, in the house of God only, do they sing and *forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more.* Do you, who roll in plenty, who have *more than heart can wish*, do you grudge your poor brethren this, their only pleasure? Cruel as Egyptian task-masters, do you not only oppress them in an iron furnace at home: but do you refuse to grant them the modest request of going into the wilderness to meet their God? O insufferable tyrants! when they set out, do you, like Pharaoh, say, *We will pursue, and overtake?* Why, this is like taking away *the poor man's little ewe-lamb, which drank of his cup, and lay in his bosom*, and which appeared so criminal to David, that he declared, *The man, that hath done this, shall surely die.*

The two ceremonies of washing and changing their garments, when they approached divine worship, are said to be found in all ancient religions;

in the various modes of pagan worship, as well as in the Jewish ritual. Indeed, a little common sense, without revelation, is enough to convince people, that the spirit of the world has nothing to do in public worship. We may therefore believe with S. Paul, even independent on his authority, that *behave well in a public assembly* is one of the first and plainest commands, neither hard to discover, nor irrational to obey.

Let us pass to the second article. The assembly in question is *the church of the living God*. A stronger reason still for good behaviour. A congregation assembling to worship God in Christ doth neither assemble against his known and express will, as all assemblies for immoral purposes do; nor are they assembled merely for convenience, as people in places of traffic are; nor are they assembled on principles of self-interest, as civil states are; least of all can it be supposed, that a blind chance collects them together: but they assemble by the express command and direction of the eternal and *only wise God*. When the prophets foretell the establishment of divine worship in the heathen world, they say, The Lord shall *call a nation*; God shall *persuade* Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem. The apostles, therefore, name the primitive churches *the called* in Christ Jesus. Very properly then did S. Paul say to the Thessalonians, *God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness*; and very justly did he infer, *He therefore, that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God*.

Not only does the church assemble by divine authority: but also every part of their worship is prescribed by the living God. Do they sing? they have the example of Christ, and his command by the apostles for their practice. Do they pray? they are directed to make *supplications, prayers, intercessions,*

*tercessions, and giving of thanks for all men; for this, they are told, is good and acceptable in the sight of God their Saviour.* Is the word of God preached? their ministers are commanded to preach, and they are ordered to *take heed how they hear*; to which an apostle adds, *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.* All these exercises proceed from the regal authority of the son of God. They are the laws of his kingdom, and these are his officers and subjects executing them. Are the ambassadors of an earthly prince sacred? Are the meanest officers of a state venerable for their office-sake? And shall not the church of the living God be unmolested, while building a tabernacle according to *the pattern given on the mount*? When Jacob foresaw the scepter in the hand of this descendant of Judah; when he foresaw the *equity* of his government, and the *authority*, which supported it, he abhorred a disturber, and cried, *Judah is a lion's whelp, he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion, who shall rouse him up?* Is there not iniquity enough in abstaining from these exercises yourselves? Will you go yet farther, and affront the Lord by disturbing those, who do worship him? Answer this plaintive question, *Why persecutest thou me?*

There is a nobler sense yet in which the church is *the church of the living God*. A christian church is not only a part of his empire: but it is his palace also. It is *the house of God*, the family in which he dwells. We know in general so little of the nature of spirits, and, in particular, so little of the supreme Spirit, that we must be content to enjoy without attempting to explain this excellent promise, *I will dwell in you, and walk in you, I will be your God, and you shall be my people.* When a soul meditates on God, it sees his power and glory in the



*sanctuary, it tastes a loving-kindness better than life, it is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, it exclaims, His strength indeed is in the clouds, but his excellency is over Israel. Full of a sense of his favour; afraid of arousing his displeasure; such a person prays, Scatter them, that delight in war; Rebuke the multitude of fierce bulls, whose cruelty, with the calves of the people, whose folly, would deprive the church of such a blessing as the presence of God.*

In God's immediate presence; while his servants are doing his will on earth as it is done in heaven; while they act under his authority, and endeavour to display his glory; who but would say, *I also will sing of mercy and judgment; I also will behave myself wisely in a perfect way; I hate the work of them, that turn aside, I will not know a wicked person?*

Finally, Behave well in the house of God, because it is *the seat of truth*. This can neither be said of the world; of the schools of philosophers; of the temples of idols; nor of the Mosaic economy. Shadows in the temple of Solomon; blasphemy in the temples of idols; vanity in the schools of science; treachery in the world; *to whom, then, Lord, shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*

Truth is in the church as the church is opposed to the *world*. All, that the world proposes, is summed up in three words; honour, pleasure, profit. What falshood often in the objects! oftener still, what falshood in the means of obtaining them! The church only is the seat of rational pleasure, real honour, eternal gain. They invent in the world high-sounding titles, *great swelling words of vanity*, they deck themselves with these, and call the fantastic assemblage honour. They eat, they drink, they buy with subtilty, they sell with treachery, they marry, they give in marriage, they  
vainly

vainly boast of themselves, they cruelly slander others, and they call it pleasure. They lose immortal happiness to procure a present sum, and they agree to call it gain. And so sanguine are they in these pursuits, that they call those ill-bred clowns, who, to stop their career, venture in pity to disturb their reveries. Shall people of this class, *deceiving and being deceived*, shall they be indulged with decency and good behaviour? and shall not they, who pursue in the church of the living God nobler objects, shall not they participate the same blessings? Communion with God, which is attended with profit, pleasure, and honour, is the noblest pursuit. God forbid any should interrupt so laudable an ambition! Should a christian stumble into a playhouse, or wander to a race-ground, should he riotously interrupt the companies, every tongue would exclaim, Is this your religion! Yet what would be shocking at a play is good-breeding at church.

Truth is in the church opposed to *the schools of philosophers*. Were it the truth of an art, as of architecture, painting, or statuary; were it the truth of a science, as of astronomy; you might go to the shops of mechanics, or to the public schools; and, should you find a man excelling in his profession, reason would require, that respect should be shewn him. But the truth in question is *the truth of God*. What the philosophers had of this in the light of nature, *they changed into a lie*, and by revelation they never had it. Was Socrates to be respected at Athens for teaching a little natural religion? how much more respect is due to the servants of Christ teaching in the church the truths of revelation! The church is the seat of religious truth; and although many fine things may be said of Athens and Rome, yet *In Judah only is God known*; in  
Judah

Judah therefore, *the arrows, the bow, the shield, the sword and the battle* should be broken, and *none of the men of might should find their hands*. How painful is the remembrance of the respect shewn to other truth, while religious truth is despised? Glory over us, ye professors of every science! Ye also, who teach the most trifling art! your lot seems preferable to the fate of those, who preach *Christ, the wisdom, and the power of God*. In quiet you teach your disciples to fence, to dance, to draw; O that we also might be suffered *in quiet to possess our souls!*

Again, the church is the seat of truth opposed to the falshood in *idols temples*. The church speaks of mysteries: but they of impossibilities. *God manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory*. Great mysteries without controversy! but mysteries however of godliness! and herein they differ from the mysteries of an atheist, who has no religion; and from the mysteries of a deist, who has a false one. These, with all the pagan errors of old, are mysteries of iniquity; systems invented to serve sin. When S. Paul went to Thessalonica, some infidels *took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar, crying, These, that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also*. These say, *there is one king Jesus*. But what said the apostle? *Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you*. If he thought proper to behave unexceptionably to such a generation of liars; with how much reason might he say to Timothy, *Behave well in the church of the living God, which is the pillar and ground of the truth!*

Finally,



Finally, the church is the seat of truth in distinction from the *Mosaic æconomy*, which was a general draught, *a shadow of good things to come*. The truth of prophecy, the truth of all the types and shadows is in the new-testament church. Christ is the priest whom Melchisedec prefigured, the king whom that venerable personage represented; he is *the end of the law*, the substance of all its shades; and you know how S. Paul treats this subject; *If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. He, that despised Moses's law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath troden under-foot the son of God, and done despite unto the spirit of grace?* Thus, you see, every idea in the text confirms the exhortation; all say, *Behave well in the house of God*.

These are the just sentiments, not of the meeting-house only: but of all denominations of christians; and should any one of our people violate these sacred rights of society, we would assemble the body, execrate his conduct, and expel him from our community.

Let us conclude by remarking the evils, that are produced by ill-behaviour in the church of God. Who knows but *a plain unvarnished tale* may place this article in a proper light? Forgive me, if it should be long, perhaps I may have a right for once to try the patience of those, who often exercise mine.

When I was first called to the pastoral office by this congregation, about fourteen years ago, I had an opportunity of inspecting the papers belonging to the society, among which was the covenant or agreement signed by all the members, before they were admitted to the Lord's-supper, as the rule of their actions. I was the more curious to examine  
this,

x this, as it described the manners of the old dissenters in Cambridge from their first toleration, and had been their rule of life for more than half a century. To my great surprise I found one article forbade their entering on any account whatever into the established places of worship. Another prohibited their accompanying with people of that community. A third strictly enjoined them not to intermarry with any of the members of that church. The penalty for a breach of these articles was excommunication. I was surprised, that a people, who were neither required to abjure in form, Atheism, Deism, Judaism, nor Popery, should yet be required formally to abjure the established church. The church of England only was the object of their inveteracy. My astonishment increased on finding that such a covenant was drawn up by the famous Joseph Hufsey, one of their former pastors. He was a man of great learning and piety, a very popular preacher, and deservedly respected by all the dissenters in the county. Indeed, his ideas of learning and piety were so refined, that he was very susceptible of an affront from people professing either to be knowing or good. For my part, having been educated in the established church, having conscientiously dissented from it, and having suffered on account of my dissent, I had been naturally led to examine, and to abhor intolerant principles, and my notions of church-discipline were very remote from these articles; however, great respect was due to Mr. Hufsey's judgment, and, I thought, it might edify me to enquire the cause of so extraordinary a conduct to the established church. An opportunity soon offered. The congregation invited me again to take the pastoral office. I thanked them for their generous confidence in a person so young: but begged leave to refuse the pastorship. They urged me to give a reason

reason for my refusal; which I did, by assuring them, that I could not in conscience agree to their discipline, which I thought by far too rigorous. None of the old men attempted to plead for the old discipline; they all agreed, however, in declaring that it was highly proper, when it was first established; and assigned the ill-behaviour of the gownsmen at Meeting as a reason. Jews and Papists never entered their assemblies, they had a good opinion of them: but the gown came frequently, and always disturbed their worship; they thought them therefore the profanest of mankind; and that the most antichristian church, which nourished such members and ministers in her bosom. I'll tell you, Gentlemen! how the gownsmen of that age behaved in the church of God.

When a young gentleman came first to college, finding no amusement in books, manuscripts, experiments, or any of the riches of literature, he must be amused with the oddities of Cambridge, among which Old Hufsey, the presbyterian parson, (as the cant of that day was.) was always numbered. Away a posse went to meeting, and in defiance of statutes and proctors, they would publish all along the streets, that they were going to have a little fun with the preacher. Arrived at the house, they would bang the doors, stalk up the ailes, fling themselves on the sides of the pews: just come from country schools, many of them from charity schools, they thought, to give themselves airs were the marks of good-breeding. One, with a *lack-lustre eye*, with a vacant countenance, and a harmless heart; would toss, and twirl, and play with his cap; and when tired with that amusement would walk off. A second with a *brazen brow and an iron sinew*, if the minister



mentioned a word, which was not in his school-dictionary, would swear, he never had heard such a word in his life. A third, who thought he must act some part, would laugh, and, for want of discernment to know when, would often laugh when he ought to have blushed. A fourth, with *eyes full of adultery* (I use S. Peter's language.) would stand on tiptoe, stare at all the ladies in the meeting, and sometimes, O lost to all decency! would peep under the women's hats. Do you wonder, my brethren! that there have been instances of the good women's losing all christian patience, and, before the whole assembly, slapping their faces? Ought that young gentleman to complain, who one day mistaking an old for a young woman, was knocked down by the old lady for his impertinence? These were the glorious criteria of academic politeness at that time of day. Whether the modern practice of hunting for the preacher, as astronomers hunt for Jupiter's moons, with magnifying glasses, were then in use, I cannot tell. If it were, I should think, nothing could justify it; for if students eyes be worn down with hard night-reading, and writing, they should remember, that they come to divine worship rather to hear than to see; beside, If *spectatum veniunt*\* be allowed, *spectentur ut ipsi*† ought not to be refused, and would not that have been, think ye, a very edifying sight? Some hundreds of people worshipping God by spying one another's features through glasses, the preacher in his turn spying them all! But to return.

When I had heard all this, I own, I was struck: but having, I know not what, partiality for the gown, I tried to excuse what I could not in my conscience

\* They come to see.

† They come to be seen.

conscience approve. I urged their *youth*. That, said the good old men, is no excuse; on the contrary, it aggravates their crime! The virtue of youth is modesty, and when a young man has lost his modesty, possess what he will, he is an object of horror. I pleaded their *birth*: but that would not do. For, said my opponents, if they be gentlemen's sons, they sin against their own knowledge; and if they be poor lads, they sin against humility. Does it become poor lads, said they, to disguise themselves in a gown, and insult us, *who would have disdained to have set their fathers with the dogs of our flocks?* Such as they, said one,

Forget the dunghills where they grew,  
And think themselves the Lord knows who.

I said, they were *members of a famous university*. They replied, that therefore they should be concerned for the honour of that reverend body; that this was the way to disgrace the whole university; that the worst part of the worst man's character was, *he ate of my bread, and he lift up his heel against me*. I added, that as Mr. Hufsey preached often, preached to a plain people, and for their sakes preferred a popular familiar dialect before a scholastic accuracy, or before an elegant delicacy of style, perhaps he not only thought with Quintilian that perspicuity was the first, but the only virtue of a public speech, and, intent on answering the great end of his ministry, the salvation of his people's souls, he might sometimes offend against the laws of speech. They answered, it was not likely that a man of learning should do so; that if he did, it would be easy, though not generous, to say to an undergraduate-censor, *Physician, heal thyself*; that every man of sense would attend to a public speaker's design more than to his address in deliver-

ing himself. At length, I had exhausted my pleas, and, as I could not excuse, I was forced to content myself with pitying and blushing for young men, whom, with all their faults, I sincerely loved.

Nothing of this, however, was urged for the continuance of the old rigid discipline, and I took the pastoral office only on condition of their abrogating laws, the manifest tendency of which was the maintenance of party-prejudices, the murder of christian love.

You will perhaps ask me, What effects followed? I will tell you. The *living God*, the guardian of his own gospel, always ready to succour the well-meant though weak efforts of all, who endeavour to extend his empire of love, this God mercifully overruled providences to answer our wishes, and caused the relief to proceed from the very men, whose order had caused the scandal. Aware of the prejudices of the good people of the congregation, I endeavoured to conceal my acquaintance with some pious gownsmen then in college; however, it came out, and, as I feared, offended several worthy people, who even suspected my orthodoxy, and questioned me about it. I made the best apology, that I could, for my intimacy with these good men. I said nothing of their families; for my dissenting brethren had no idea of a gentleman without virtue. I said nothing of their learning; for they did not care for all their Latin and Greek unless subservient to piety. I endeavoured to prove them GOOD MEN: How! said they, *can any good come out of Nazareth?* Should any say so now, I would answer, *Come and see.* In short, these gentlemen, with their modest deportment at Meeting, with their friendly and edifying visits among the people, with abstaining from all, that could give offence



offence to any, with practising the virtues that approve men the servants of God, effectually destroyed party-zeal; and now, blessed be God, churchmen are seen frequently at Meeting, dissenters occasionally at Church; and people begin to act as if they thought the religion of christians a religion of love. In those days of yore, how often have dissenting ministers in Cambridge bewailed this thorn in their nest! how often have they envied their brethren, whose lots were cast in the least civilized parts of his Majesty's dominions! Happy you, said they, who in sea-port towns preach to a rough ship's crew! happy you, who preach to *plow-men and vine-dressers*! you enjoy the toleration allowed to protestant dissenters in the fullest sense. You ask, *Where is THE PLACE OF WISDOM? The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: for the price of wisdom is above rubies!* For our parts, we answer, *The fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.* How often did these good men, when preaching in country-towns; remember the saying of a certain nobleman, who, when he saw the kind actions of the beasts in the Tower to each other, exclaimed, We have been mistaking, these are the rationals, and we are the brutes!

To come into our places of worship now, after such scenes as these, is like coming home after a long rough voyage. Indeed some imperfections attend us still. Still there is, as there always will be, an Ishmael in Abraham's family. Notwithstanding all the just and generous efforts of the heads of houses; notwithstanding the frequent attendance of proctors; notwithstanding the example of hundreds of well-behaved gownsmen; there will be now and then an awkward, an ignorant, or an intoxicated lad, whose vanity and brutality will be  
insensible

insensible to all. Such a person appears among you, gentlemen! as Satan presented himself among the sons of God: but, as a proof of the extreme folly of such a lad, to what a disadvantage does he appear in your company in the house of God? Contrasted with you, who behave well, he produces the same effect on spectators, as an ill-drawn daubing hung by the side of a finely-finished picture would produce; the beauty of the one aggravates the horror of the other. With the greatest disgust all behold, the more delicate sex especially behold the frightful creature, and every tongue proclaims his enormous praise. All think him too bad for reason, and punish him with the severest ridicule; and, should that question, sometimes put up in the schools, be ever put up in a circle of ladies, *Detur vacuum?*\* they would be provoked to answer *Detur.*† It is in the brain of him, who behaves ill at divine worship.

Let us neither dissemble, nor be ungrateful. We derive an advantage from even such as these; an advantage great enough to induce us to waive every power, which college-rules, university-statutes, and the laws of the land give us over such culprits. It is never necessary for dissenting ministers in this town to teach their people reasons of dissent. Why should you puzzle yourselves, my brethren! with reading or hearing long dissertations on church-discipline? Why compare the established hierarchy with the apostolic simplicity? Why trace this subject through the writings of your Owens, and Goodwins, and Wattss, and Doddridges? Behold a more popular way. Look at these members—members, yea ministers of the established church. *These are thy gods, O Israel!* . . . Behold your reasons

\* Is there an empty place in nature? † There is.

sons of dissent held up in your places of worship to public view in characters of brass! *engraven with a pen of iron in the rock for ever!*

But I have done. Pardon the weakness of speaking about myself. Accept my thanks for indulging me with your attention so long. Assure yourselves, that my aim is to conciliate christians to each other; and the means proposed to you in order to enable you to obtain this end, are *gentleness, goodness, faith*. Ah! why is not every party amongst us, why are we not all, building in God's temple as the Jews of old in Solomon's, where *neither hammer, nor ax, nor any noise was heard in the building?* If this be not worth saying and doing any thing to obtain, I know not what is; and, if any be insensible to this, I leave him to the laws of his country, the reproaches of his companions, the regret of his conscience, and the mercy of God.



four of which held up in your hands of yesterday  
to public view in characters of great respect  
and honor of the cause of truth.  
I am, I am, I am the witness of  
speaking about truth. Accept my thanks for  
the things you will have attended to long. These  
principles, that now are to Christian churches  
in each other, and the reason I appeal to you in  
order to enable you to obtain the end, and the  
truth, that you want. But why is not every  
one, that is, who are we not all, holding in  
God's temple as the Jews did in Jerusalem,  
where many of them were, but not the truth,  
and the things that were in the temple.  
I am, I am, I am the witness of  
to the laws of the temple, the things that were  
in the temple, the things that were in the temple,  
and the things that were in the temple.

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